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MOMENTS

BY
DOUGLAS AINSLIE

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LONDON
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE
AND COMPANY, LTD.

1932



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BY THE SAME AUTHOR
JOHN OF DAMASCUS
AN EPIC OF CREEDS

Third Edition

Transferred to Mr. ARTHUR HUMPHREYS
187 PICCADILLY

Price 6s.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

To write with equal success of the three great creeds of the world many endowments are needed. Without a warm-hearted sympathy with each every one of them there can be no broad-minded insight into the spirit of their teaching; and save with this good-will as the driving power to perception were rash, if not impious, to challenge the verdict of those who are guided by the light of the Christ, the Buddha, and the Prophet. In India, for example, the three faiths meet in every Province, and the poet who should attempt to string his rhymes on the sacred chords, in a spirit of irreverence or of rivalry, would deserve to be execrated there by every Christian, every Buddhist, and every Muslim. On the other hand, a writer who, like Mr. Douglas Ainslie, would rise, or earnestly attempt to rise, to the height of a theme so fruitful and far-reaching would assuredly kindle in the hearts of our Indian fellow-subjects a glow of kinship, and that not with himself alone, but even among the followers of the rival creeds, so that the Christian would reach out the hand to the Buddhist, and the Muslim to the Christian, the one acknowledging in the other what he had borrowed from him. And this would appear to have been the author's leading motive in writing *John of Damascus*.

Now, Mr. Ainslie, in this the third edition of his suggestive poem, has given the world in swift, spontaneous verse the mature expression of the conception in which his thoughts have long been centred. With a singular deftness of touch he has contrived to weave so many fresh arguments in the woof of the material as to produce the effect of a work almost wholly new. Not only these additions help to knit the thread of the narrative more harmoniously together; they redound as well to the reader's ease in keeping in touch with it. Nay, they do something more than this: they go far both to enlighten the student and to charm the partisan. Pre-eminently is this the case in the stirring pages which deal with the story of Muhammad's life and the conquests of the mighty warriors who fought after him. The figure of Khalid leaps out from among them, in bold and magnificent relief, as the arch-exemplar of Arab valour. In his disgrace not less noble than in his triumph, the undeserved humiliation thrust on him, on Omar's accession to the Khalifat, fires the heart to indignation. Still more moving is the pathetic heroism of Huseyn which finds its martyrdom and in the massacre of the Family of the Cloak. In a word, everybody whom the advice may concern would be wise to allow Mr. Ainslie's revised and enlarged version to take the place of its forerunners on his shelves. As for those who missed the opportunity of coming under the spell of the poet's first appeal, they are fortunate at least in this regard, that his latest work is far more likely to work its will on them, to their enlightenment, as well as to their delight. His new readers will be many, for *John of Damascus*, having 'stretched his limbs,' now wears a resolute air to extend from day to day the circle of his influence and his friends.'—*Morning Post*.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS—continued

'Perhaps no more authentic expression of the Oriental spirit has a English poetry since FitzGerald translated the quatrains of Omar be found in Mr. Douglas Ainslie's *John of Damascus*. When revised first edition we praised the freshness and spontaneity of the poet that *John of Damascus* has (in the author's words) "stretched his the total extent of some twelve thousand lines, we find no diminutive qualities. In this day of snippety "occasional verse" it is a welcome to come upon a solid sustained effort on a great theme written by love with his subject. Long as the poem is, it is neither oppressive Mr. Ainslie writes easily and naturally, and is wise in avoiding an exactitude of metre. He does not aim at being sonorous or majestic makes no effort to produce "haunting" lines. His diction, however, musical and fluent, and lures the reader along by constant variety of turns of expression. It does not belong to that "distilled" order from which one can pick out a couplet here and there for quotation rather, in his own words,

rhyme that rings
true to itself and sighs or sings;
now free, now prisoned in the throats
of birds that careless give their notes,
according to a harmony
that in the listener first must be.

The subject-matter of the poem deals with far more than the life-story

of John Mansour, the Damascene,
Chrysoroas, "he of the golden flow,"
true poet, if saint has ever been,
and saint as true as poet, I ween.

That is told in a few pages. For the rest, an episode in the saint's career the framework of a religious dialogue. The great creeds of the world—Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam—have each its champion, who recounts the origin and history of his faith. The fascination of the East, which has its spell more and more over our literature, has taken hold of the mind and communicates itself to his verse. —*Outlook*.

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THE EPIC OF THE STEWART
(To appear shortly)

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MOMENTS
BY
DOUGLAS AINSLIE

AUTHOR OF
'JOHN OF DAMASCUS'



London
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND
COMPANY, LTD.
1905

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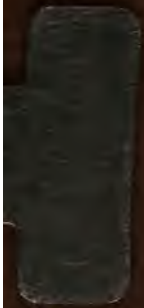
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TO
FEDOSIA DMIETREVNA
THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED

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PREFACE

I HAVE to thank the proprietors of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and of the *Outlook* for permission to reprint two of the poems which appear in this little collection.

A few others have already been published in the volume *Escarlamonde*; the 'Lines written at the Château de Montaigne' stood as proem to *John of Damascus*; 'Babylon' and 'The Seven Sleepers' also form part of that poem; the 'Elegy on the Death of Paul Verlaine' was published in the last number of *The Yellow Book*; and 'The Stirrup-Cup' has appeared in several Scottish journals.

DOUGLAS AINSLIE.

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1872-1885

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been members of the Society since its organization in 1872. The names are arranged in alphabetical order, and the year of admission is given in parentheses. The names of the persons who have died are marked with an asterisk.

1872-1885

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A Stirrup-Cup,

TO S. G.,

‘μειδιάσεις’ ἀθανάτῳ προσώπῳ.’

THE mountains are her monuments,
Invisible in grey :
O changer of environments,
Is then the past away ?

See! the leaves are falling faster,
Wet with rain from autumn trees,
All in brown and gold disaster :
Is your memory dead with these ?

Ah ! never dead, for every season
(We were lovers all a year),
Hath for me a mystic reason,
Breathes her subtle atmosphere.

Like her : none ; but she could dower
Things of earthy mould and make
With her own peculiar power ;
They grew marvels for her sake ;

MOMENTS

So through chance of changing features,
Seen in strangers leagues apart,
Through the gambols of earth's creatures,
Flies her memory to my heart.

When the world to ruin crashes,
Lying where all manhood must,
Dust myself, from other ashes
I shall know her delicate dust.

SHANKLIN

3

SHANKLIN

TO S. G.

‘Ich habe darüber nachgedacht

Schon manche tausend Jahre.’

HEINE.

WHY wilt thou haunt me in the falling years?

Thou art a ghost, yet wearest the diadem
And all the crowns of life; from hopes and fears
I am divorced, yet wouldst thou bid me stem
The stream that watereth the vale of tears.

Dost thou remember where the footway crept
Down toward the sea, in tumbled wealth of green?
Seen through it, like an eye, the ocean slept.
We were together then; no shadow cast between.

And thou wast with me on that wind-blown morning
We walked across the field to reach the wood,
Shining like April on December dawning,
As underneath the rustling oak we stood.

And once again, when Nature's thunderous army
Drove squadrons of white rain along the chine,
I swore the lightning would not dare to harm thee :
Thou whisperedst secrets which are mine and thine.

Together then, and still forever with Thee !
For not the sight of all thou art become,
Nor where I too am fallen ; ah ! believe me,
Can quench the flame, nor dry the fountain dumb.

ESTO PERPETUA

5

ESTO PERPETUA

You tell me you grow older,
Dear, as the years flow past ;
You ask me when we shall meet again,
'For life will not always last.'

Three lustres, or very nearly,
Have passed upon the world,
Since from terraced height of our delight
Us twain the Titans hurled.

Full well I know that never,
Here nor in heaven nor hell,
We shall be as when grew between me and you
The white flower asphodel.

But fear not at all, for always
Thou art thyself to me—
Though there be not now one curve of the brow,
Not a tress unchanged of thee.

Ah! burn, let burn the calendars
And all the wise men's lore;
For what care I, though the body die,
Though we meet here never more

So close me those jewelled windows,
Which are thine eyes, my dear,
As once on a day, far far away,
Before the fiends came near.

Then, though I be not by thee,
Lean as thou leanedst thy head
Think back again through the years of pain
To the time when the fairies led

Our wandering wayward footsteps
Through the kingdom of romance,
(Or maybe mine strayed while Vivian stayed
For the knight of the golden lance).

In many a silent vigil,
In the seething haunts of men,
I have wrought, I have wrought, till the form I
sought
Lives in the brain and pen.

ESTO PERPETUA

7

I love thee, made of the movement,
Of the glow and the joy of my youth,
Of the days when a smile, made but to beguile,
Meant hope and love and truth.

I love thee, and now not ever
Can the gods nor the fiends destroy
The image that making, myself forsaking,
I carved a marble joy.

'And I, what shall I be,' Rupert,
'If a white cold form is thine all?'
'Ah! dear, never fear, thy name's writ clear
On the marble pedestal.'

January 1898.

LINNÆA

THESE little flowers whose tendrils closely cling
 Round old tree-stems, and to their native earth,
 Gathered for love, shall know a second birth;
 For here indeed, when quiet fir-trees sing
 A ceaseless dirge to Time, who aye doth wing
 His noiseless way through woods, they feel no dearth
 In dull mortality, nor know the worth
 Of love in life, these little flowers of Spring.
 Henceforth enhyacinthed amid the hair
 That veils the goddess Sibyl they shall share
 Her immortality, who doth outshine
 Endymion's moon and Shelley's evening star—
 Twin orbs, whose beams, I think, eclipsèd are
 By hers, whence flows a glory into mine.

1885, DELGATY.

MNEMOSYNE

019

MNEMOSYNE

Now many an age is buried
Since first thou rosest for me
Where I stood in the June-green coppice
Gazing outward on the sea.
Blue were the morning billows,
White gleamed the mariner's sails,
The tufted grass was playing
With the edgeless western gales.
Toward me the Tritons bore thee,
Poised on thy roseate shell,
Pendant thy gold hair glittered,
Thy sea-eyes wrought their spell.
I did not dare to greet thee,
Thou wast so fearful fair :
'Steer to his heart,' thou saidedst,
'I will make harbour there.'
The thousand years are over,
My spear is split in twain,

Dinted are hauberk and helmet,
And I have fought in vain.
Thou wast nor goddess nor dæmon,
Thou wast an Eidolon,
The shadow of something perfect
Breathing a malison.
I know I shall never know it,
I shall never know of thee
More than the right eternal
To thy bright agony.
And now though the God of Heaven
Made gift of myself to me,
I would choose to meet thee gliding
Again on the morning sea.

THE DREAM

11

THE DREAM

LAST night as I lay a-dreaming

Alone in my frozen bed,

Meseemèd I caught the gleaming

Of thine imperial head.

Then me from my place upraising

(For I sat far away)

I thridded the crowd agazing

On the players at their play.

But when our eyes a-meeting

I was piercèd by the gleam,

I knew by thy sweet smile-greeting

In my dream it was a dream.

A BALLAD OF BIRDS

High, high above the earth the happy birds
Are passing with the sunlight on their wings.

Oh, eastward ho ! or westward ho !

Ye know nor heed not whither ye go.

Above the clouds the sky is fair,

The sun is shining everywhere,

Why should ye care ?

Oh to be of you,

Oh to be with you,

For ever roaming hither, thither,

Sweet birds, for ever careless whither ;

Oh to be free from myself in the air !

High, high above the earth we are looking down

On quiet hamlet or on busy town,

All things we see, dew glittering on the rose,

Dew or a tear, who knows ?

We see but do not know.

Oh, eastward ho ! or westward ho !

A BALLAD OF BIRDS

131

We know nor care not whither we go.
Above the clouds the sky is fair,
The sun is shining everywhere,
Why should we care?

For ever roaming hither, thither,

We birds, for ever careless whither;

Oh, I am of you,

Oh, I am with you,

Oh, I am free from myself in the air!

THE DREAM

I stood alone above the Leven lake,
Amid the fairies' circle, where the trees
Draw back to watch their dance; the autumn breeze
Came tired to this old place, too tired to shake
One fir-tree cone, but ever as it passed
Dead leaves kept falling fast

Within my heart, for I was very sad,
Thinking on Mary, Queen, and the blue spears
Glinting adown these shores in buried years.
Sudden beside me was a tiny lad,
His voice seemed faint, and, though he stood by me
Sounded beyond the sea.

'She is not gone,' he said, 'red hair and lip,
And many-changeable eyes, and the ruinous smile.
Wreathing such sweet perdition in the isle
Yonder where once she dwelt, but as a ship
Full-sail a-tossing now upon thy brain
I see the Queen again.'

THE DREAM

15

Oh ancient man,' I said (for now I saw
That he was very old), 'I prithee tell
By what fell pact my secret soul you spell,
And who you are.' He answered, 'By a law
Simple beyond thy ken, but who I be

I will reveal to ye :

Merlin, I was in England yesterage,
Silviano for infant Italy,
The better part of Faust ; here I am he
That wrought King Fairy bale and mickle rage
Kissing his Queen by magic of the moon,—

Thomas of Ercildoune.

And (for you could not see me otherwise,
And only here mid-circle of the ring,)
You are of ours, no vain imagining
Which as you think deep in your being lies
That is for me clear, clearer than the sphere

Of yonder placid mere.'

He pointed to the lake that then was glowing
Beneath a coloured cloud ; I did discern
The line to the sky-line from the little burn

Two purple herons, and though I watched their going
Anxious, intent, no way they seemed to gain,
Circling around in vain.

'They are enchanted birds,' he said; 'at eve
They rise and circle till the twilight dies:
'Twas the Queen charmed them, and her island lies
Midway their circular flight; for her they grieve
Hopeless as you: deep doting on their grief
They would disdain relief.

'And if perchance the tide of ages rolled
Back on its waves, and the beloved Queen
Reigned secure in royalty serene,
You and these birds would seek some otherwhere
A queen for their despair.

'Wide is the dæmon circle, and you ride
Æons apart the centre where I stand,
Heart to the mystery's heart, but there is a band
Woven of lights, thoughts, scents and sounds, that hide
Their secret from the uninitiate—
These link our fate.

'Such are our gems and flower,—the chrysopras,
The opal with her green and milky lights,

THE DREAM

17

Mimosa asking love from those who pass,
Then dying when the kiss upon her lights,—
Such also that sweet singing of the swan
Unheard, yet dreamed upon.

‘And all these things are phases of the vision,
Changing from age to age its symbolry,
Whereof we are part, fast fixed beyond division
To the sad secret of our destiny.’
He paused, I heard the tinkling of her bells,
Whereof his legend tells.

‘Thomas,’ I said, ‘bide yet with me awhile,
Fain in this charmed roundel would I see
The regent-soul, to do her fealty.’
Then fathom-sunk rose to his lips a smile,
Like murderous pearl unclenched from diver’s hand
Who bears it dead to land.

‘Oh temerous moth that vagrantly a-winging,
Followest the light that dances on the moss,
Hither and thither fluttering till across
Some reed-bound pool the moon her image flinging
Drowns in the rippling circle of her mirth,
Such thy request is worth.

' But for the sake of the dæmonic spark
That doth inform thy clay, I will reveal
What most of things dæmonic thou mayest feel
And perish not; look in my eyes and mark
What with thine eyes thou mayest on earth behold
Multiplied millionfold.'

Then suddenly I felt as though, expanding,
Earth's total store of joy myself contained,
Round me, as on a mountain crest, were standing
A thousand perfect forms, and each retained
The crown as of a thousand wars victorious,
Placed on their brows by my transcendent power
A light as of the seventh heaven shone o'er us,
Bliss-plumed I soared on the triumphal hour.
Sudden, I felt as though a chasm were riven
Deep in my central self wherein they fell,
And like a vapour from the chasm arisen,
Anguish ecstatic folded me in hell.
Then I beheld their thousand hands a-waving
Farewell eternal through the hopeless night,
Felt wafted kisses in my pierced craving,
Each one the last upon my lips alight.

THE DREAM

19

When I awoke the day had come again,
Thomas was gone, with all his wizardry,
And I alone, save for a crested wren
Who in his beak a leaf of chestnut-tree
Had brought to wreath the corse, and stood amazed,
Seeing the dead man raised.

THE VISION

LAST night I saw thee, not in dull disguise
Diurnal of base worldly intercourse,
But swimming in upon the tide of dreams
Thou dawnedst on me as in ancient days,
Imperial in imperial perfectness.
But wherefore didst thou whisper, as I thought,
'See where my hair is withered into gray'?
I looked again, but lo, thine ivory brow
Shone out eternal from the radiant night—
And then again methought that such a ring
As once was ours had come upon my hand
All unbeknown, and turning round to seek
The riddle's meaning, read it in thine eyes
That fair brimmed o'er with heavenly promises
Thus was my fate revoked—but lo, thy face
Sudden grows marble, and thy vanished eyes
Speak truth in silence from their scooped graves

SPRINGTIDE

21

SPRINGTIDE

OPEN the windows of thy soul
And let the morning in,
Thy garden grows with the rathe primrose,
The sweet Spring days begin.
The dew still glitters in the cup
So green the fairies love :
It is their wine, a draught divine,
No tear from the sky above.

Yet, yet beware the dove that sits
Cooing upon the sill,
Her rosy beak of human blood
Has not yet drunk its fill.

MEMORY

A. LET loose the locks of memory,
Let them stream along the wind,
And to the phantom of the past
The hideous present bind.
It may be she will reach thee yet
Alone in distant path,
The yellow ribbon in her hair
Gleams as an aftermath—
Then cease thy wail.

B. Had Death been kind,
As once her sister was,
No happier wight had taken flight—

A. Thou blamest Death because
She did not strike when at thy hand
Ten thousand daggers stood.
Coward! 'twas fear and her soft voice
That murmured 'God is good.'

MEMORY

23

B. I could not tear myself away
From where myself was given ;
I could not seek for Paradise
When earth was hell and heaven ;
So grant me leave to play awhile,
Like idiots in the sun,
With gems, religion, power, and art,
For life and death are one.

MUSIC

WANDER alone the grove while music plays,
 Thine Ariadne be thy pensiveness,
 Then will she lift thee into subtler sphere
 Than any track of well-defined thought.
 There fancy palpitates, the goal outstepped,
 Like a white fawn when from her mother strays
 She lifts her eyes within a charmed wood.

ELEGY ON DEATH OF PAUL VERLAINE 25

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF PAUL VERLAINE

'Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise.'

VERLAINE.

So the poet of gray slips away,
The poor singer from over the strait,
Who sat by the Paris highway,
Whose life was the laughter of fate:

The laughter of fate, but the woe
Of the gods and the mortals who heard
The mystical modes as they flow:
Broken phrase, broken lute, broken word;

Broken up as the attar is crushed
By the steel of the flower-killing weights,
From the soul of the roses that blushed
Through the scroll of Elysian gates.

As a sphinx-moth, with shivering wings,
Hovers over the thyme in the garden
One moment, then fairyward brings
The honey he gathers for guerdon ;

So you the oases of life
Lightly touched with your frayed, rapid wings,
Poor poet ! and drew from the strife
The peculiar honey that clings

To your magical metres and ways,
As they sway with the moods of the soul,
Semi-conscious through haze in amaze
Pressing on to a dim, distant goal.

'Be always a poet or saint':
Poor Lélian was saint and was poet,
But not always, for sometimes we faint ;
Then he must forget that we know it.

In opaline absinthe forget
(His Iris his bow in the sky)
Fickle light in the storm, and that yet
Is his only true bow to steer by.

ELEGY ON DEATH OF PAUL VERLAINE 27

Good-bye then, O Poet, good-bye!
Not for long will you sojourn alone:
Very soon for your help we shall cry,
Little souls in a region unknown.

Then Lélian, king of the land,
Rich Lélian, will teach us his speech
That we love, though we half understand,
For love is the measure of each.

1896.

AFTER READING MAETERLINCK'S
'AVEUGLES'

THROW off the veil, here is no palace hall
For golden epithet and glittering rhyme :
Here words are steel and stone—transpierce or fall
By natural law—here where the only crime
Is to be blind, to have never seen the sun
Sail through his realm at midday, to have known
Midnight an hundred years (and there was one
Far older sat among them). Life is sown
So deep with sorrow that at length may rise,
Piled on the grief of ages, to the skies
Some word supreme, some vision fit to tell
The gods they slumber, mingling earth and hell
—Vision and word ;—*on dit que tu es belle*,
And poor blind hands, seeking the asphodel.

MOURNING

29

MOURNING

IN MEMORIAM—FLORENCE AINSLIE,

OBIT AUGUST 1897

'I must not wear the green or the blue,
For she is dead, so tender and true.'

Ah! wear the blue or the rose and green,
Wear the cloth of silver with gold between,
Each curious woven fold concealing
All that the self within is feeling.
That matters not; nay more, devise
Some brighter splendour for the eyes;
Pluck the whole poppy-world to share
The pale straw-colour of your hair,
Or let the blaze of the sapphire's eyes
This once outvie your dimmed eyes.
Nay, play an you will, nay, sing if you can,
For the life of the leaf is the life of a man.
But if, alone, when the night is dead,
She turn toward you her graceful head—

Just so she smiled, just so released
Those little words which are the least,
Yet cling the longest to the shade
Our love has of our memory made—
'Ah yes! ah no!' with her own half smile
And your heart beats hard with pain for a
For the past is present and gave no warning
Then you are mourning.

A MOMENT

31

A MOMENT

'LET fall your hair, sweet Sibyl,' was my prayer,
 'Your glorious hair,
This only once; we are alone, but were
 Olympus there,
 What god so fair?'—
She smiled and looked, and smiled and laughing drew
 A gold pin through
 Their coiled brown, then suddenly there flew
 Such-wise as do
 The brave bright blue
Sea waves that clip Cythera, roll on roll,
 And hide the whole
Of her fair form, hid time, and hold my soul
 In their control
 While ages roll.

TO A MARBLE MASTERPIECE

THOU standest there, serene indeed a form
As e'er Apollo conjured from the night,
Or Dian sought again with silver rays.
There is not anything in all thyself
But telleth of the wisdom of the Gods
Who made thee like themselves, that thou should'st
take

Unblinded as thy right the seat beside
Olympian Zeus; but now, thy peers being dead,
Lo, thou art left alone upon the earth
To dwell with pygmies in a world of pain.
Yea, ours thou art, but thine I will not be
To perish animate in thy marble arms.

SONNET

33

SONNET ON THE CAST OF A DROWNED
GIRL'S HEAD

SWEET face of child that art a child no more,
But angel ravished from our earthly ken,
Leaving this mask behind, whereon in vain
I strive to spell the secret that she bore
Beneath that smile unto the luminous shore,
To blossom there in flower of speech as when
A frozen rose-bud come to life again
Openeth beneath the sun-ray more and more.

Unclose, sweet lips, tell me your mystery !
Is it for sorrow overpassed on Earth,
Or sweet surprise of new-born Ecstasy,
Of heavenly joys the marvellous new birth,
That thus you smile ?— now let them closed be,
Yet greet me then, bright with eternal mirth.

DHU VORN

SEE yonder river gliding through the plain
In silence to the immemorial sea,
Black as the clouds, instinct with memory,
She is all turned to tears which flow in vain;
Hopeless they flow, for never drop can gain
That birch-tree glade, where glittering in glee
Ages ago they dwelt an hour with thee
And earned an immortality of pain.

Oh for the rainbow art ! I knelt in prayer
Before the faintest shadowing of her
By one whose soul had slipped into his brush;
Praying I knelt amid the unconscious rush
Of multitudes reëchoing, ' Woman ne'er
Was fair as she '—while I was kneeling there.

KOPRONYMOS

35

KOPRONYMOS

SONNET ON 'AN ARRANGEMENT IN BROWN AND GOLD,'

BY J. M. WHISTLER

BENEATH the glittering of the Southern Cross,
Within a closèd glade a perfect flower
Gazed downward on a mere, and hour by hour
Of the water-spirit her beauty limnèd was ;
Till spirit-coaxed that flower did glide across
The reedy marge to hide in watery bower.
But seeing her thus mergèd, from his Tower
Raged furiously the Knight Kopronymos.
'Yea, mine she is,' he cried, 'she 's mine, he 's mine,
By gold and iron, by the Right Divine
I bought'—but as he raves they disappear
Deep in the dim recesses of the mere,
Spirit and flower : then rising in her place
That spirit laughs and mocks his angry face.

THE SURREY SIDE

‘Quid ergo? verna es
Hoc quod transtiberinus ambulator,
Qui pallentia sulfurata fractis
Permutat vitreis.’—MARTIAL, i. 42.

You ask me what I do, sweet lady,
 (‘I cannot *bear* an idle man;
Women alone should haunt the shady
 Groves and let fall the painted fan.’)

I answer: ‘Ah! how very true,
 But then, my dear, we cannot all
Aspire to don the yellow, or blue,
 And hasten at “The Party’s” call.

‘I love the Surrey shore of Thames,
 When all the world is sleeping, dancing;
I love to watch the watery flames
 In wild reverberation glancing.

THE SURREY SIDE

37

' To gaze across at Westminster
How sweet on this calm night it is,
And guess the weary Minister
Says, " No," or " Yes," to that or this.

' Would I be he, or he be I?
As I have been I shall remain,
Though the moon revel in the sky,
A fiery goddess once again.

' And yet I love Diana well,
I love her for her burnished glass,
And I will buy and she will sell
Mirror or matches as I pass :

' (We've trafficked thus for many a year ;
How well I know her every mood !
And other queens have met me here
To drive a bargain sometimes good).

' Oh ! all ye men who walk by day,
Ye know not of the wondrous things
Which happen when the sun's away
And those may fly who have the wings.

' Of old the gods grew tired of heaven
Sometimes, and sometimes they would dei
To leave their high Olympian haven
And brighten all the Attic main.

' Since then the other gods were born—
Christ at the meeting of the ways
Gathers the wanderer forlorn :
The ancient gods endure always :

' Immortal exiles, they must live
Between the twilights of the world,
Not having any grace to give,
For ever from Olympus hurled.

' Yet who would not, who *knew*, delight
To loiter on till break of day
And hear the London sparrows' flight
That bear the Paphian queen away ?

' Therefore I stand, my lady dear,
Where the dark river nears the sea,
And treasure all the sounds I hear,
And hide the sights she shows to me.'

July 1897.



VENETIA DIGBY

39

VENETIA DIGBY

Suggested by her portrait at Dulwich, done after death

DIGBY, I love you ; not because you wrote
Upon the soul, and Immortality,
Though oft, indeed, I have enjoyed to quote
Your far-sought lore—your quaint cosmogony.
No, for my fancy plays about the name
You loved before all others in the world :
Venetia Digby, famous with your fame.
See on the pillow her pale face and curled
Dark hair, where many a jewel came.
She died, they say, because, though fair indeed,
You would make her fairer than the gods allow ;
Therefore, with many a drug and nameless weed
You wrought and sought until your puckered brow
Relaxed, with certainty of aim achieved.
Then smiling, and with many a thought of love,
Lightly you passed, as one from care relieved,

Through the long corridors, until above
The trophied hall you stood within her chamber.
There certès you of all your love discoursed,
But most of all how well her robe became her ;
And tendering the cup, ' This draught has cost
Me, dearest, many nights of application ;
A subtle draught it is, for though your tint
Make blush the lily, and glow pale carnation,
Although within your eyes such lights do glint
As lead mankind haphazard o'er the marshes,
Though when you bow no swan dare curve the neck
Though by your voice all melody quite harsh is,
Though now, indeed, your charms reveal no fleck,
Yet will this draught make all as fair again ;
Make Waller quite forget his Sacharissa,
The Castlemaine go veiled, the Shrewsbury plain,
And Nell—his Majesty forget to kiss her.
So drink, Belovèd,' and he pressed the cup
Into her hand ; but she, when now she heard
How easy a triumph lay in one small sup,
Smiling, drank deep, and then without a word,
Turned drowsily—to die upon her couch ;
And Digby left her—sleeping. Did he know
That death, perchance, lay with her ? Who can you
He knew, or knew not, who loved beauty so ?

AVATAR

41

AVATAR

* L'âpre plaisir que de vivre une vie double ! La volupté si profonde d'associer les contraires ! Comme la sirène doit être heureuse d'avoir la voix si douce ! *—MAURICE BARRÈS.

LIVERS of double life,
Haunters of heaven and hell,
Protagonists in strife,
How came there then in us so many
souls to dwell ?

Far off in buried time
Sometimes I see myself,
Careless of any rhyme,
Haunting the woods, a hunter and a
simple elf.

MOMENTS

Again across the seas
With Mercury to steer,
Convoying argosies,
A subtle merchant I, holding but
treasure dear.

Another age in Rome,
Imperial in debauch,
My soul has made its home,
And through the garden glides lit with
the Christian torch.

Within some green oasis
The gentle part of me
Has dwelt with homely faces,
A villager content with village com-
pany.

Proud beyond word of praise,
In deep baronial hall,
Levies in kind I raise,
And the border chiefs must gather at
my call.

AVATAR

43

Within Toulouse's walls,
All garmented in gold,
Where golden sunlight falls,
Before Count Raymond's court my
roundel's wings unfold.

Then turning down the leaf
Which opens on to-day,
What wonder that the sheaf
Of all my wild desires no single joy
can stay?

A throng of many men,
Gray with a million years,
Haunters of marsh and fen,
Courtiers and merchants, kings, heroes,
and slaves to fears;

A motley throng they press,
And each in turn will cry:
'I am *thyself*, none less
Than the other selves; come feed me,
lest I die.'

MOMENTS

Who would not kill the whole
Of this vile rabble rout,
And earn a white new soul,
And wisdom to withstand, and power
to be without?

Come, Holy Buddha, come!
I enter on the path;
I seek at last the home
Where all my selves gleaned up shall
leave no aftermath.

THE MIRROR OF VENUS

45

THE MIRROR OF VENUS

TO G. D.

DRAW nigh, fair ladies, and behold in me
One who hath journeyed o'er the purple sea ;
And Venus queen hath mirrored bygone treasure
In this my glass—draw nigh and see me measure !
Behold the Egyptian by the dreamy Nile—
Asps in her hair and hidden in her smile ;
Aspasia walking in the Stoic's porch—
The torch of wisdom and the inverted torch
Of love are hers ; and Queen Semiramis
Crowned with red blossom of a ruinous kiss ;
And yet a queen—that queen of hearts and Scots,
Whose fame the lily springs from soil where rots
Elizabeth—yet now behold fair ladies,
The flower of all these flowers—behold Queen Gladys.

TO G. D.

SHALL I reveal the splendours of her shape
Curving in lines of sinless symmetry,
And spread, as fowlers use in Italy,
Mirror and rhyme-spun net to make the rape?
Her beauty burns the net, her wings escape,
And in the mirror I can only see
A fowler all forlorn of poesy,
Gazing with blurred eyes and lips agape.

Shall I reveal the colours of her mind
That flits among the trees of Paradise,
Now perched upon the bay-tree of the wise,
Now on the laurel of the Lover's prize?
Fain would I follow, but mine eyes are blind—
Therefore descend to me, be to thy poet kind.

October 1903.

METAMORPHOSIS

47

METAMORPHOSIS

SEE Phyllis, the queen
Of the azure eyes ;
See Phyllis, the queen
Of the witty and wise.

Frolicsome, fairy-bright,
Who would not revel ?
Follow thee, knave or knight,
Angel or devil ?

Nimble as antelope,
Lightsome as fawn,
Fair as a bud of hope
Kissed by the dawn !

Head as the Goddess's
Nimbussed in light,
Guiding the Odyssey's
Heroes aright !

Lips like the crimson
Petals of rose,
Resting their rims on
The line of the nose

Of the marble Venus
Rosy entwined.
'Come, choose between us,'
You cried behind

The shimmering statue,
And straight I sped,
But came not at you,
And clasped instead

Fair Aphrodite,
Smiling as when,
In the days of her might, she
Descended to men.

Ah! kisses on kisses
I rained on her lips,
For what are mistresses'
Scorpions and whips

METAMORPHOSIS

49

When the Goddess of Beauty,
The Queen of the Loves,
Throws the leashes of Duty
On necks of her doves?

Ah! could I but tell
With the voice of her sea,
As he chariots her shell,
How we loved, I should be,

Like the Lesbian poetess,
Throned in the mind
Of all lovers and mistresses,
Kind or unkind!

But lo, as I turned me
A moment, I saw
The goddess that burned me
Come stone as before

When she shimmered between us;
Some magic was done:
Or were Phyllis and Venus
As one is to one?

D

THE SUPPER-PARTY

THERE was a hush in the warm summer air :
I waited till adown the carven stair
Should wind the dim-haired lady of my dreams.
Through vari-coloured glass there floated gleams
Which tinged the walls rose, violet and blue.

At last she came : quite silently I drew
Her hand to mine, and kissed her on the brow.
We passed along the hall—I see her now
Glide swanlike through the world of trivial things,
(She changed them with the brushing of her wings).
Supper was spread, a row of ortolan
Upon a golden plate epicurean,
Green figs, and peaches blushing in a heap
Among the lolling roses half-asleep
On the white cloth ; the crystal globes of wine
Shone gold and red ; her eyes and speech with mine.

THE SUPPER-PARTY

51

All else was silence. Nay! my subtle queen,
Place me no finger those curved lips between :

I have but shown the stage, though even say
We gave the world a glimpse of our strange play—
Trailed our long silences in masquerade,
And of your smile a rosy essence made—
Think you they'd follow with applause or frown?
Come! let us talk of Pindar to a clown.

A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY

FOR VIOLET

OPEN the map, my dear, and seek the lands
Which have filled the horn of fame ;
Mark well how small the space where glory
Rome and the Attic name.

God's mulberry-tree, with veined and fissured
Let one fall in the sea,
And from its fibres, lo, the silk-worm weaves
The fairest webs that be.

Plato and Pheidias are the silk-worms called,
Their web is Grecian art,
And by it are the eyes of the world enthralled
And by the eyes the heart.

The boot of Italy that giants wore,
Great Cæsar and the Popes ;
Romeward mankind still bends it to adore
Earthly and heavenly hopes.

A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY

53

Now view the pampas and the Asian space
Which reaches out for aye,
Like idlers sprawling flat upon their face,
Void, vain and useless they.

Now, gaze on heaven and mark the suns that burn,
Immensities of fire ;
And round these suns the planets which must turn
In well-controlled desire.

How small by them our earth!—yet earth perchance
Has mightier destiny,
Is the Athens of the angels, and God's glance
Seeks earth most lovingly.

THE HAGUE REVISITED

Town gray and red, so trim and clean,
Still on your level way, I see,
As when beneath the beech-trees' sheen
Your homely comfort sheltered me.

No, you are changed not any whit,
Your lesser place you hold and keep,
Since through the archway with De Witt
Your greatness passed with him to sleep.

You are not changed; but I, ah! yes;
Since those old friendly days of peace,
What breakers and what wilderness
My soul has sought to find release!

Ah! folly-changing mood of mine,
See you not steadfastness alone
Can build the house in comely line,
Can carve the human life as stone?

THE HAGUE REVISITED

55

As stone, and then shall fleur-de-lys
Or what you will engarland it;
When firm the first foundation is,
Column and plinth and cornice fit.

Let trail the roses then, let wave
Wet Naiads' hair in clear relief;
Let Bacchus quaff the gift he gave,
Let Cupid peep behind the leaf!

BABYLON

BUILDED of memories, Madain
Glitters in sunlight on the plain,
'Twin city' of Persia, built upon
The place where once was Ctesiphon,
Where once Seleucia and the flow
Of Tigris sweepeth by its walls,
And Tigris to Euphrates calls.
See where those mighty streams draw near
And each the other's voice doth hear ;
And many voices once they heard,
These waters as in evil hour
Upreared its shadowy head that tower
Of Nimrud which is Babel's tower ;
And of all languages one word
They know and whisper as they flow
Past Babylon which cannot hear
Now since for many and many a year,
All grass-bemantled, grass begrown

BABYLON

57

Is this her once most delicate ear,
And blocked the portals of her eyes,
And lapped in grassy mysteries
Are the ways and windings of her street
Which sounded once with lovers' feet.
Yea, all her glories now are flown.

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS OF EPHEBUS

BUT how the sleepers seven hid
Within the cave at Ephesus,
And how Al Rakhim with them slid
Into the cave somniferous,
This tale the Prophet tells to us
In simple words as Allah bid.
The companions of the cave were seven,
And when the emperor Decius
Ragèd against the will of heaven,
Their hearts with constancy were strong
And each to the other said : ' Too long
Have we endured within our ear
These words of blasphemy to hear ;
Our God is the Lord of earth and of heaven,
To him alone shall our praise be given.
Therefore from Ephesus let us go
Unto the cave whereof we know,

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS OF EPHEBUS 59

And maybe that the Lord will make
That we perish not for his dear sake,
But if he will, far better thus
To die than to live in Ephesus.'
And as together journeyed they
Met them Al Rakhim by the way :
' And dear unto God in heaven are ye
And dear upon earth ye are to me,'
Said the dog Al Rakhim, ' and while ye sleep,
Lo I will turn ye and will keep
Watch that no evil come to ye.'
And in the cave they lay and slept ;
And watch by them Al Rakhim kept ;
And from their sleep they waked, and one
Asked of another : ' Hath a day
Passed since we came within the cave ?'
' A day perchance and the night begun,'
Answered that other, ' but how old
Thou seem'st in face, this cave how cold,
And dark as 'twere a very grave.'
And the seven sleepers hungered
And to one of them those others said :
' Go seek the town and buy us bread.'
So he went forth, and in his hand
He bare a coin where curled and grand

Stamped was the head of Decius ;
And he came unto Ephesus,
And to the breadseller went he
And gave the coin ; but presently
The breadseller cried : ' Here cometh one
With the coin of an emperor bygone ;
Surely a treasure under the ground
This antique hoary man hath found.'
And to the governor he brought
That sleeper stepped from out his dream,
And strange that sleeper's speech did seem
And strange his tale of how he sought
But yesterday the cave, and how
His brethren waited even now
To eat the bread ; and the governor
Went with that sleeper, and he saw
Those other sleepers standing there
By the mossy cave with mossy hair ;
And things of dream were over them,
And dim and faint their answers came,
As from a voyager when the shore
Dwindles and dwindles evermore.
And very soon those sleepers seven
Turned on their sides and soon they slept,
And watch by them Al Rakhim kept

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS OF EPHESUS 61

(For ever faithfully watched he);
And the sleepers passed from earth to heaven,
And with them must Al Rakhim be
Who watched so long, so faithfully.'

LINES WRITTEN AT THE CHÂTEAU DE
MONTAIGNE

' WORSHIPPER of the Sun and Moon
And the evening star this people was,
Before we brought the priceless boon
And held before its eyes the Cross.'

Thus speak the priests of every creed
And the Old Gods perish as is due,
And the New triumph, till indeed
These new are old and men make new
But always as the old creed wanes,
Her votaries will linger yet,
And though Lord Christ in Heaven reigns,
Queen Venus they will not forget.
See them steal forth at still of eve,
Alert while all the world is sleeping;
See the stained altar, see them weave

LINES

63

Her mystic wreaths while she is peeping
Through the pale cloud. Just so one day
The tale of Christ a tale of Fairy
To the new men will seem when they
With Venus shall have placed our Mary
Among the myths of old : they smile
Handling the crown of thorns ; for them
The Christian legend will beguile
An idle hour, the azure hem
Of Mary's robe, the Cherubim,
The glistening glories of the sainted
Are but old fancies growing dim
As fade the marvels Vinci painted.

Thus of the world in man's first youth ;
He wanders on until arrested
He stands before the temple Truth
Built on the hill-top olive-crested.
He kneels, and glowing there between
The white slim columns of her shrine ;
Perfect, implacable, serene,
Dawns upon him the queen divine.
Then saith the world : ' An empty shell
For the true goddess you have taken ;
Long ages past the old faith fell

And the marble temple was forsaken ;
You are a man now, and behold
These things are really worth the scheming :
Science and power and art and gold
And women fairer than your dreaming.
And as the pagan with the priest,
So manhood spurns his boyhood's god,
Vowing he cares nor knows the least
Where winds the hilly path he trod.
But when the field of youth is mown
And earlier his evening closes,
Lo ! he steals trembling forth alone
To deck the scornèd shrine with roses,
And weeping in the sacred place,
See him recant his blasphemies :
Iron-gray his hair, and in his face
Engraven the world's miseries.

O goddess, grant him lowly kneeling,
Pilgrim and penitent of youth,
The vision of thyself revealing
Art and Religion, Love and Truth.

THE SECRET OF THE SUN

65

THE SECRET OF THE SUN¹

AGES ago when first his splendour rose
Upon the Gardener Father of mankind
And Eva clasped him trembling, as the blind
Those closed portals suddenly unclose,
Aged they, and joyance in their hearts arose
While the first morning dawned upon the mind.
AGES ago men knew his path assigned,
Yet when he veiled his face their courage froze.
But yesterday men spoke of how the fire
Which ever rageth at his golden heart
Must some day cease, burned as an earthly pyre.
To-day we guess the secret of his art
As radiant on their way his steeds depart
Winged and immortal as the soul's desire.

October 1903.

Suggested by the theory that radium is the vivifying
element in the sun.

OUT WI' MONTROSE!

'Our wi' Montrose!' What battles in the sound!
'Montrose is out!' Hark! down the distant glen
From crag to crag the magic words resound,
Make leap the life-blood in the hearts of men.
Hay, Graham, Grant, Macdonald, Cameron:
True steel, and hearts as true as steel may be,
Untainted with foul Knox's malison.
They'll teach the rebels Stewart pedigree.

See on the left the Gordon and Montrose¹
Gallop whig Urry forth the rutted field,
See on the right a Titan² meet his foes,
Sweeping their spears like brushwood from his
shield.
Scotland is ours! England is England yet,
Till drowned in blood and gold Montrose's sun
must set.³

¹ Battle of Auldearn, 4th May 1645.

² Alaster McColl.

³ Battle of Philiphaugh, 13th September 1645.

A STIRRUP-CUP

67

A STIRRUP-CUP

LINES WRITTEN ON MEETING THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF
CAMERON OF LOCHIEL.

LADY whose ancestor
Fought for Prince Charlie,
Met once and nevermore,
No time for parley !

Yet drink a glass with me
'Over the water' ;
Memories pass to me,
Chieftain's granddaughter !

'Say, will he come again ?'
Nay, Lady, never.
'Say, will he never reign ?'
Ay, Lady, ever.

Ay, for the heart of us
Follows Prince Charlie ;
There 's not a part of us
Sways not as barley

Under the breeze that blew
Up the Atlantic,
Wafting the one, the true
Prince, the romantic

Back to his native land
Over the water :
Here 's to Prince Charlie and
Lochiel's granddaughter !

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